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PRESS RELEASE

U.S. Ambassador Visits Local Communities, U.S. Government Programs

Ambassador Cekuta traveled to Yevlakh, Goranboy, Naftalan, Tartar, and Barda June 16-17 where he met with local communities and officials, heard their concerns, and explored opportunities for further U.S. engagement.

To see first hand how U.S.-sponsored programs have improved the quality of life for Azerbaijanis, Ambassador Cekuta visited five such initiatives, including a USAID project providing medical care and educational support in Goranli village, a U.S State Department co-financed vocational training center for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and their families in Tartar, and a U.S. Defense Department-funded water supply project in Yeni Dashkend. The Ambassador noted how these projects are examples of the United States' long-standing partnership with Azerbaijanis as they build a brighter future.

In Tartar, the Ambassador met with IDPs and their families to hear about their experiences and challenges facing their community. Flagging the United States' continued determination as one of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs, he discussed recent steps toward achieving a comprehensive settlement to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, including Secretary Kerry's participation in the May 16 summit in Vienna.

Ambassador Cekuta also met with the Executive Committee in each region to discuss existing and new areas for cooperation in building a strong, stable, prosperous, and democratic Azerbaijan.

The United States has provided over \$1.3 billion in assistance to Azerbaijan since 1992, with \$115 million of those funds going toward assistance to refugees and IDPs. This assistance from the United States has made a difference in the lives of many Azerbaijanis, including improvements in health care, the clearing of land mines, expanding free Internet access, strengthening civil society, empowering women, and giving technical assistance to farmers to increase their productivity and raise their incomes.